

AN
A N S W E R
TO
DR. PRIESTLEY'S LETTERS
TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
EDMUND BURKE.
IN A LETTER TO THE AUTHOR.

BY A L A Y M A N,

OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

" Chiefly them that walk after the Flesh, in the Lust of Unclean-
" nefs, and despise Government. Presumptuous are they, self-
" willed, they are not afraid to speak Evil of Dignities."

2 PET. ii. 10.

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ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, LONDON.

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L E T T E R, &c.

S I R,

YOUR Pamphlet addressed to the Right Hon. Edmund Burke will fall into the hands of two descriptions of readers, who, from their previous sentiments and usual mode of reasoning, may probably form very opposite opinions of it. They, who from your well-known disaffection to all establishments have regarded you as their leader, and the champion of Nonconformity, will, no doubt, highly value a work in which they find sentiments and designs so perfectly in unison with their own. But others, more solicitous to preserve the peace and good order of society than to hazard them at the risk of present confusion and misery, for the chance only of future perfection, will certainly see it in a very different light. They cannot overlook those many inconsistencies and fallacies, which are

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not the misconceptions of an ingenuous writer, but the evasion of a bad cause. You may still enjoy the reputation of being its able advocate, though, in endeavouring to support you have unfortunately injured it. But what title you can claim to the character of an impartial antagonist, I shall refer to the judgment of my readers. When a writer makes use of false and confident assertions, fallacious reasoning, and illiberal abuse, we naturally conclude, either that the cause is a bad one, which requires such support; that the writer is not a man of competent abilities; or that he has maintained his argument rather through motives of interest, than with a design to convince his readers of the truth.

It is very difficult to reconcile to common apprehensions the apparent inconsistency in the coalition of unjustifiable revilings and Christian forbearance. You have shewn little of that ancient simplicity and mild spirit, which you so much admire and recommend: and which, as a venerable author observes, “ did not so much incline to that severity, “ which delighteth to reprove the least things it “ seeth amiss, as to that charity which is unwilling “ to behold any thing that duty bindeth it to re- “ prove. The state of this present age, wherein “ zeal hath drowned charity, and skill meekness, “ will not now suffer any man to marvel, whatsoever “ he shall hear reprovèd by whomsoever.”

I willingly attribute to the nature of the cause, which you have undertaken to defend, all those blemishes that stain your work : I believe they are absolutely necessary to preserve it from falling unnoticed into oblivion : but surely it was beneath your endeavours, to rear its buttress upon the ruins of other men's characters. Though you could have found no better foundation, a sense of honour, or honesty, might have suggested the baseness of building upon depreciated merit and blasted reputation. But the *History of Corruptions*, Sir, appears to have been your favourite pursuit ; and viewing them, alas ! through the magnifying medium of party prejudice, you have taken the natural frailties of human nature for enormities of the first magnitude.

It is difficult to conceive on what principle you can justify your conduct to your own conscience : your endeavours all tend to produce confusion : you anticipate in extatic raptures the satisfaction of beholding, ere long, all the sacred bands of society broken ; and each man left to a government of his own formation. The duties of submission and obedience, of honour to kings, and reverence to governors, are not included in your catalogue of virtues. On the contrary, you not only by example, but precept, teach us, under sanction of holy writ, to *laugh at our governors*, to resist their authority, and to revile God's sanctuary and priest.

—But never suffer your zeal to precipitate your

reason into rebellion against God and man. Remember there are unalienable rights, which God claims at our hands : and that it concerns us first to see that these are preserved inviolate, before we engage in adjusting the rights of men. Our duty to God is the first and great commandment : that to our neighbour, though indispensable, is second to it.

It frequently happens, that men, who, by their abilities, have long enjoyed the publick confidence, and have directed publick opinion, still retain their influence by the mere authority of their name, when their productions are no longer recommended by reason. But when this is discovered, none but the ignorant and bigotted will adhere to the sound, without the substance of authority. It is my present design therefore, to detect the falsity of your confident assertions and insinuations ; to exhibit the fallacy and weakness of several of your arguments ; and to expose that illiberal abuse, which you have so profusely bestowed upon all who adhere to establishments.

In p. 12, of the Preface, you collect, from the letters of the French King, his opinion, that there was a want of total reform in the constitution of the French government. But it is not reasonable to expect, that the King would utter his real opinions, at a time when he was in actual captivity,
a prisoner

a prisoner of the National Assembly. Nothing can be fairly collected from hence.

In p. 14, you ask, "where is our policy then, according to Mr. B's reasoning, in raising lawyers, whose existence depends upon rendering property questionable, to the rank of judges?" It appears that you have mistaken the description of men, mentioned by Mr. B.; who was speaking of country attorneys only, those petty fomenters of village vexation, and not men of talents, who are generally conspicuous characters in all places. You quote Dr. Ramsay, in his American History, who likewise speaks of the same kind of men: "men bred in the habits of publick speaking, who make a distinguished figure in the meetings of the people," &c. In answer to your question, it is to be remembered, that when able lawyers are raised to the rank of judges, their existence no longer depends upon the questionableness of property; they then become perfectly disinterested with regard to every cause that comes before them. Their decision will be then according to plain law; which is the grand protector and guardian of property. From whatever rank our judges are selected, as their duty is to decide impartially, so they are raised above all motives which may seduce them from the paths of justice.

In p. 16, you assert, " that the actual divisions " of the French country are no more squares than " our counties." But your bare word will no more settle this matter, than Mr. B.'s. Your own information may satisfy yourself; but your readers will not be satisfied without explicit proof.

Thus (17,) you oppose your contradiction, to overthrow an assertion, respecting the intended murder of the Queen of France, in her bed-chamber; you tell us, that a gentleman, who was at Paris during the whole of these transactions, informs you that there is no truth at all in what Mr. B. says. A strong argument this, to convict Mr. B. of a falshood, though it modestly retires to the bottom of the page, in form of a note! Your gentleman informs you too, that the report arose from the Aristocrats!—No doubt, Sir, this is true; and I will give you my reasons for thinking so. Because it could hardly in reason come from any other: for you know it is as much the interest of the Democrats to suppress, as of the Aristocrats to publish it; and whether the fact is true or false, (which time only can discover,) your readers may shrewdly suspect, that you had your information not from an *Aristocrat*.

You say, (25,) by *metaphysically* true, can only be meant, *strictly* and *properly* true. This explanation can by no means be admitted. If you
will

will be so good, Sir, as to call your attention from words to things, you will find no paradox in the words quoted from Mr. B. We all know that a metaphysical truth is often taken for such an one, as admits of the greatest possible certainty: but metaphysical philosophy is often opposed to natural and experimental: the first affording a speculative, the last a practical truth. In this sense you must understand Mr. B.; and I do not see, except from misapprehension, how he could have been made to speak any other sense. You must well know, that metaphysics have furnished mankind with the most pernicious absurdities and error, as well as the most sublime truths. It is a science so liable to abuse, that Atheists and Deists have made it their weapon against the obvious truths of our holy religion: nay that the best men have been known to sacrifice their common sense to metaphysical absurdities, the illegitimate offspring of prostituted reason. Alas! Sir, were we to govern ourselves according to metaphysical truths, we might pass for philosophers, but hardly for men of sense. The non-existence of matter has been demonstrated to be a metaphysical truth, by perhaps the most pious and ingenious man of his age: but I apprehend, none but his few credulous disciples can believe this conclusion strictly and properly true.

In p. 51, you say, that "we all entertain, of pre-
judices deeply rooted in our own minds, the
B 4 opinion,

“ opinion, that they are not destitute of reason,
 “ but involve profound and extensive wisdom.”
 This is by no means the case with the generality
 of men: we are sensible of numberless prejudices,
 which are totally devoid of all wisdom and reason,
 and which arise, we know not how particularly;
 but in general from education, from suspicion, or
 from capricious antipathy. Sometimes our pre-
 judices are laudable, sometimes highly culpable.
 But, in spite of your assertion, I cannot suppose
 you so extremely arrogant as to affirm, that all your
 own deeply rooted prejudices involve profound and
 extensive wisdom.

In p. 64, you grossly misrepresent the plain sense
 of the passage you quote, and, for the sake of
 victory, condescend to contend with nonsense, of
 your own invention. “ It is evident (say you,)
 “ from this passage, that you consider the Christian
 “ religion as having no respectability, or effect,
 “ without being established; and that the natural
 “ human means of the estimation, in which it is
 “ held, is the splendour and riches of such an
 “ establishment.”—No such thing is evident to
 any one, who is willing to understand the obvious
 sense of the words. All that is affirmed, or im-
 plied, is this: that an establishment, with its con-
 comitant natural human means of estimation, gives
 respect and effect to religion. And no doubt riches
 and splendour are among the natural human means

of estimation; but they do not comprize them all. This position, I am aware, is not consonant with your notions: But why, Sir, should you wrest a meaning, which neither the words will bear, nor could you possibly have supposed to have been intended, though it had been more plainly expressed?

In p. 74. you take Mr. Burke to task, and severely too, because he allows prating reformers no place among honest enthusiasts: you complain that he “allows them not the alternative of being *“knaves or fools.”* Now this might have come with better grace from you, Sir, had your own hands been clean of abuse. But as you (in p. 68 and 99) have so liberally liquidated your debt of reviling, (if ever you have suffered yourself to run in arrears at any time, which may be doubted), perhaps it would have been as well to have endured this affront, and have proceeded with what you call refutation. I shall take occasion to consider the truth of your assertion in p. 74: “judg-
“ing from myself, we are by no means disposed
“to censure you with so much severity, as you
“do us.”

Though equivocal terms from their obscurity may, like a masked battery, surprize and annoy an adversary, yet I rather think it more to the credit of your cause, to avoid every appearance of sinister
design

design (78). You may mislead the unwary, who, by granting you your postulatam, may be seduced to coincide with your conclusion: You must know then, that no Englishman can admit christianity to be called an heresy, unless you make a corrupt, and a true, religion the same. We have nothing to do at this time with what that word once signified, (if it is your fancy to use it according to its original meaning) but with that sense of it, in which it is now received. There are some men of popular abilities, with whom I should be careful how I trusted the power of attaching their own meaning to words; for if once I should grant, for instance, that christianity was an heresy, by and by, perhaps, the reverse of the proposition is to be granted too, and an heresy is to be called christianity.

But if it be your pleasure, in support of your argument, to adopt an uncommon sense of a word, instead of the usual one, we must submit; though it may be thought by some, that if it would not have hurt your cause to have written in unequivocal terms, your readers might in general have been better satisfied. But permit me, Sir, who am but a lay-divine, to give you a little information upon the subject. The English, by the word heresy, understand an error in some fundamental point of christian faith, maintained with obstinacy and dissingenuousness. For example: Those who deny the

the divinity of our blessed Lord and Saviour are called heretics.

With respect to tithes, though you have said little upon the subject, what little you have advanced is not a fair account of the case. "Tithes" (79) are comparatively but a modern invention," you say. This can in no sense be said of them: since we read of Abraham giving tenths to Melchisedec the priest.—The Levites enjoyed them under the law: In the New Testament (Luke xviii. 21.) they are mentioned: In this kingdom they had their rise very early; and though the compulsory payment of them did not take place in the whole of this country till the time of King John, that period can never be called a modern one.

In your rage for reform, you allow no merit whatever to antiquity; all is rust and deformity, and much too gross for the enlightened understanding of the present day. Nothing will suit your refined taste, it seems, but the newest fashions from France. "The whole system (you say) of the civil establishment of religion had its origin, when neither religion nor civil government was much understood (81). It was the consequence of the feudal states of Europe becoming christian, in an age when we find little of christianity but the name: its genuine doctrines and its spirit having equally disappeared." Now whatever may be
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the case with respect to civil government, I apprehend, few men of penetration can concur with you in this opinion. Religion, that is, the christian religion, might have suffered a partial eclipse, but it undoubtedly shone with at least as much lustre as it does now, when we are supposed to be such proficient in all knowledge. But christianity does not admit of such improvements as chymistry is capable of: the contrary, I fear, is the case; and that its progress has of late years been inverse, when compared to the advances of the sciences: not that these have any direct influence upon, or connection with it. But experience seems to indicate, that the further we get from the times of the blessed centre of all heavenly light, the more we are involved in those clouds of thick darkness, which are perpetually raised by the sophistifying philosophy of proud reason. However numerous and notorious the abuses of christianity were in the days of which you speak, we all know that history records only the prominent features of times. That one instance of remarkable depravity will make a more considerable figure in a history, than many thousand of domestick and retired virtue. Hence (141) the common reproach of all histories, that they exhibit little more than a view of the vices and miseries of mankind. Wherefore we must not hastily conclude, that because it is not specified, nothing remained of christianity besides the name. Some authors delight to rake together the corrup-
tions

tions of christianity; but they do not prove that there were no perfections left unnoticed. In many useful manufactures, that impalpable powder is used, which passes through the sieve; the gross is thrown aside; but even from this, there are the needy and fordid, who can commonly cull something for their own use.

But supposing that christianity, according to your assertion, had at that time lost all but its name. Now it seems in your opinion to have resuscitated, and to have become active again. For you say, that the proper means of its estimation, its truths and promises, and evidence, are the same now that ever they were. Its doctrines also and its spirit have now appeared. But this has been brought to pass under a continued series of establishments, and some of them of the most oppressive kind; and through these channels has christianity been derived even to those, who are without establishments, and unreasonably despise them. Now if your position be true, that establishments rose, when christianity was in a weak state; when it retained nothing but its name; and, it being a fact allowed by you, that it is now as perfect as ever with respect to its truths, promises, and evidence; it follows, that establishments may have been the cause, at least among others, of its convalescence. You must therefore very fallaciously assert, that establishments destroy either the genuine doctrine or spirit of christianity; or, what
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is more absurd, that they "ever must produce "unbelievers." Since it has pleased God to give us the light of the gospel through the medium of an establishment, it becomes us to reverence both. It has the complexion neither of prudence nor piety scornfully to reject the meanest instrument of God's blessing, though it should be tarnished or blemished; rather let us use our honest endeavours, to preserve it sound and pure.

I know no proof of the assertions which you so confidently advance in p. 45 and 101. The first is this: "The dignified clergy, &c. are not those "who in any country produce learned theological "works. Very few of the bishops of your church "have been writers, at least after they have been "made bishops." This first assertion is confuted by any bookseller's catalogue, if it required any other than a plain statement of it. And even with respect to bishops, a great proportion of them have been writers, even after their preferment; when their episcopal care demands their first attention. The handsome compliment which you pay the dissenters, at the expence of the dignified clergy, I shall notice presently.

The other assertion in p. 45, is equally destitute of validity. You say, that the French assembly would naturally and justly conclude, that those who were present at the Revolution Society spoke the
 sentiments

sentiments of great numbers, and those the most respectable in the country. The country, Sir, is most undoubtedly under great obligation to the Revolution Society, for all favours: but particularly for that of speaking its sentiments to the national assembly.—But your bold assertion swaggers too much: Where is your proof? Does the Revolution Society speak the sentiments of the nobility of the country? Are they the sentiments of the landed gentry, who are very numerous? Does it speak the clergy's sentiments? Really, Sir, I am at a loss to find any ground for your boast. You know well, that the most respectable men in the country are totally dissonant in their sentiments from the members of the Revolution Society, and condemn their proceedings. Such sentiments, I trust, are confined almost entirely to themselves; and your boasting assertion can be looked upon in no other light, than that of a cordial to their spirits, which you fear may have suffered under the late chastisement from the pen of a powerful orator.

Inconclusive reasoning is the natural associate of ungrounded assertion and misrepresentation: Perhaps, Sir, your haste to make some stand against so powerful an antagonist as Mr. Burke, and that inspiration of confidence, which always attends an honest man in an honest cause, made you, like David, refuse the armour of accurate argument.—David said, for “I have not proved them.”—I can
 imagine

imagine the trepidation which must have seized the host of the Revolution Society, when the Philistine book first made its appearance. "Then David said, Let no man's heart fail because of him. I will go and fight with this Philistine." Now as for this Goliath, I shall not presume to inform you, who are so able a warrior, in what manner it would have been best to attack him: I shall only endeavour to discover to your readers the insufficiency of your weapons, had you used them against a weaker enemy.

In page 3, you take for granted, and therefore require your opponent to allow, "that every private person is justified in bettering his condition, and indeed is commended for it." This position cannot be admitted: he must be a very lax moralist who can give such a canon of conduct. Your position must be severely restricted, before it is just, to those cases only, in which he, who is desirous of bettering himself, can effect it without injury to others, or trespassing upon their rights.

In p. 17, you say, "that the power of the most arbitrary princes is little more than nominal," and endeavour to put the best aspect you can upon the degraded and miserable state of the present King of France. No man, with any but a heart of stone, can behold the King of France but with eyes of compassion. I trust that all your sophistry cannot
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take away our humanity at least, though it may induce a multitude to join in the sport of cashiering kings. Who, but beings totally devoid of christian charity, can look on, without exclaiming, How are the mighty fallen ! But it is God's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. As for the power of arbitrary princes being only nominal, you must have forgotten the whole series of the Roman emperors, the present Eastern monarchs, and the early reign of our own land. Ask those unhappy slaves of Asiatic despotism, who suffer by the sabre or the bow-string at the caprice, and sometimes for the sport of their sovereign, ask them if his power is little more than nominal. I refer you to the wives of our Henry VIII. for their decision upon the subject : ask them whether their dread sovereign's power was only nominal ? I imagine, Sir, their sufferings cannot be attributed to mere NOMINAL power.

In p. 26, you undertake to exculpate Dr. Price. What success has attended your friendly intentions, the world must judge. It is, however, remarkable, that he evades the orator's rebuke (17) by softening down the word *choice*, to *acquiescence* of the people, by much the same process, as the word *rebellion* is sometimes (by certain politico-chemical philosophers) transmuted into *revolution*. This and several other observations by the way of defence, which occur in the course of your book, remind

me of a passage of peculiar force, penned by an ancient author. "So easy it is for every man living to err, and so hard to wrest from any man's mouth the plain acknowledgment of error, that what hath been once inconsiderately defended, the same is commonly persisted in, as long as wit, by whetting itself, is able to find out any shift, be it never so slight, whereby to escape out of the hands of present contradiction."

It is entertaining, Sir, to follow your apology for Dr. Price and his sermon through all its parts; but that in p. 46, deserves peculiar attention. You acknowledge that the discourse, which is commonly called a sermon, is improperly called so; but this is all the impropriety which belongs to it, you say. I confess I see no impropriety in calling Dr. Price's discourse, a sermon. But that much impropriety belongs to it, exclusively of the title, is the general sense of more than he may imagine. The company dined at a tavern, where, you say, perhaps it "might as well have been delivered." I agree perfectly with you in this: I go a little further; and apprehend it was suited better to a tavern, than a place of worship. Its sentiments were rather those, which might have been expected in an unguarded moment from a jolly toast-master, than those, which might have been expected from a divine, whose office it is to preach peace and mutual forbearance, not envyings, strife, murders and civil war.

war. His sermon, or discourse, or whatever you think best to call it, is precisely that kind of exercise, which made it necessary in former times to suppress conventicles.

In p. 27 and 30, your object is to abolish respect for princes; therefore your first step is to put them upon the level with servants. If you really mean to assert, by your question ("what real difference can there be between the two cases, &c. 27?") that you see no difference between the meanest town officer, and the first prince upon earth, I beg to decline any argument with you; for such an assertion can come only through a deficiency in that certain species of common sense, which Heaven has bestowed upon most others of the human race.

Your ingenious argument, Sir, may stand as an instance of the effects of a zealous search after truth. But this idea which Dr. Price has broached, tho' not for the first time as you rightly observe, and which you have undertaken to defend, I conceive not to be an innocent one. When the people become masters, or rather when they are told to recollect that they keep a royal servant in livery, it may be feared, (as they are known to be not the most mild of masters) lest they should take it in their heads to exert their authority with more severity than is consistent with propriety.—When you have

thus reduced kings to the rank of servants, it is no difficult matter to claim a general dispensation from all honour and allegiance. If they are servants, they are born rather to obey than command (29); and the holy scriptures, though they enjoin us to honour the king, in no place that I recollect direct honour to servants, unless it be involved in the general precept, "honour all men."

In p. 55, you flatter yourself with the liberty of eating and drinking what you please; but our tyrannical government, Sir, here again imposes its fetters upon the rights of men: if your pleasure should be to take so much of a certain medicine as to cause your death, it thinks proper to inflict punishment by denying your corps christian burial. —But granting that your whole argument was perfect, you from thence ask the question, what right has any man to complain of me, if I worship God in what manner I please? —The state has left you to worship in whatever manner you please: therefore, with this permission of exercising your natural right, what right have you, an individual against a nation, to disturb our peace with complaints and clamorous abuse against that mode of worship which the state chuses to follow? If the state forbear to controul you, how many are *your* obligations to forbearance, besides those which a respect for peace and common decency suggest?

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I confess myself unable to perceive the force of your reasoning, for denying that man is by his constitution a religious animal. "Because," you say, "we may easily conceive of a being, possessed of all the essential properties of human nature, without any religion at all." From the power of our conceptions, I apprehend, we have no proof in this case. We must have recourse to experience, which furnishes the most decisive proofs in favour of Mr. B.'s assertion; for there is scarcely any nation under the sun, which has not some knowledge or some kind of religion. Wherever reason, that grand essential property of human nature is found, there we find religion too: for we must not conclude idiots and lunatics under the denomination of men, if reason be an essential property to human nature; unless we adopt the definition of man given by a certain philosopher, who describes him, a two-legged animal without feathers. As for those unhappy perversions of reason, caused by certain kinds of philosophy, falsely so called, which induce men to deny all principles and duties of religion, we must rank them under the class of diseases of the mind; such instances prove no more, than, that from whatever cause it may be, religion is now no longer there: but by no means do they prove, that it never has been.

In the same paragraph you combat the idea of civil government prescribing in matters of religion. Our civil government prescribes to none. But it

limits those, whom it places in stations of trust or power, to a description of men, who profess to agree with it in matters of religion. For if it were to admit all descriptions, its power would be imperfect, and inadequate to the task of government; for want of that unity which is essential to strength. It would be a monster, composed of contrary principles, whose mutual oppositions would destroy all motion. Besides this inevitable weakness, innumerable commotions would perpetually invade the peace of society: for there are some political bodies, which separate are perfectly quiet and inoffensive; but when incorporated, become a violent and dangerous mass. Thus iron and sulphur, when mixed, will cause an earthquake; when apart, they are as harmless as Dissenters out of office.

I have been at some pains to acquire a clear idea of your analogical reasoning from laughter to religion: you say, that "government can have no more right to interfere with respect to this constitutional property, (viz. religion) than any other constitutional or essential property."—If you grant that it has as much, it will be very nearly as much as it pretends to. For in the instances which you have adduced, of eating, sleeping, thinking, reasoning, and laughing too, if any man eats, drinks, or laughs to the injury of society, the civil government not only has a right, but exerts its right to controul him. The civil government, likewise,
makes

makes religion an object of its care; which, as it is often, by enthusiasts and pretenders, made an instrument of injury and confusion, is thus guarded from all the attacks, that fraud and violence, in the garb of holiness, are perpetually bringing upon society.

Though you and your associates, Sir, often indulge yourselves in laughing at your governors, either over your bottle at the tavern, or from the pulpit, (when the text perchance might be from * Acts xxiii. 5. or 2 Pet. ii. 10. or from some such passage)—I say, though you should think proper to indulge yourself, I presume you do not mean to draw any argument from your own practice in favour of the point you are contending for. However, Sir, let me advise you to be careful where and when you laugh; for in this case, the liberty of the subject is dreadfully infringed, especially in a country of freemen. And if you should unfortunately exert your constitutional property of risibility at a juncture which the arbitrary judge may think improper, you may get a lodging in a prison, for what is called *contempt of court*.

In p. 65, we have a curious instance of bringing scripture in support of your point. You ask, "Did

* Acts xxiii. 5. "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."—2 Pet. ii. 10. "Chiefly them that walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government, presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities."

“ our Saviour give his apostles any instructions
 “ about connecting his religion with civil power ? ”
 The answer to this is another question, Did he
 forbid it ?—On the contrary you say, “ our Saviour
 “ declared that his kingdom was not of this world ;
 “ which must mean, that it did not resemble other
 “ kingdoms, in being supported by public taxes,
 “ and having its laws guarded by civil penalties.”
 That it must mean what you would wish it to mean,
 is not to be admitted.—It seems “ every one of you
 hath a doctrine,—hath an interpretation.” (1 Cor.
 xiv. 26.) To support a favourite system, what will
 you not say ? Who, but a man of your abilities,
 Sir, could have discovered in these words, a total
 overthrow to all bishops, dignitaries, revenues, and
 every other appendage of establishments ? But let
 us impartially examine, how far your *necessary* in-
 terpretation is to be trusted. When our blessed
 Lord was brought before Pilate, he said unto him,
 “ Art thou the king of the Jews ? Jesus answered,
 my kingdom is not of this world ; if my king-
 dom were of this world then would my servants
 fight.” (John xviii.) An unprejudiced reader can
 deduce nothing from these words of our Lord, but
 a plain declaration that he was no temporal prince ;
 and, therefore, though the people styled him king
 of the Jews, he denied all pretensions to an earthly
 sceptre. This is the obvious sense, and the only
 one which these words can bear. If your argu-
 ment is in need of such a forced interpretation as

you

you have been pleased to infer, declare it at once without further evasion ; and hesitate no longer, Sir, to give it up, when it can be no longer supported by fair reasoning and honest enquiry. An ingenuous confession of error is more honourable than a treacherous victory : good men had rather be slaves to truth than tyrants in error.

Your assertion in p. 67, “ that Monks were most numerous, when they had nothing but deserts to retire to ; then also were they most respected ; and they did not sink into contempt, till they had acquired what you call, the *natural human means of estimation*” ; is not to be received as altogether founded in reason. Monks were very numerous at that time, but, I apprehend, not more numerous before the erection of monasteries. History will determine this point. But your insinuation, that it was the natural human means of estimation that sunk them into contempt, is no fair argument. For it was the abuse of their prosperity, and not the prosperity itself, which sunk them. And the same kind of reasoning is quite sufficient, if admitted, to overthrow any of the most salutary institutions.

You say likewise, “ that the secular clergy were infinitely more respected, even by the rich and great, while they were poor, than they have been since they have got their present splendid
“ establish-

"establishments." If this were the case, their respect proceeded not from their poverty: if you suppose it did, it follows that it becomes the duty of the clergy to embrace poverty, or any other mean by which they may secure respect. But poverty was never yet of itself a motive of respect. And the respect, which they enjoyed, was never yet attributed to their poverty. But wealth and splendour always have produced, to the best of my observation, a certain degree of respect, even with the bulk of mankind.

As to the greater quantity of respect which you say the ancient clergy enjoyed, in comparison to what is paid to the modern, your profound historical information ought to supply you with the truth. I am rather inclined to controvert the justness of your unqualified assertion, though the fact may be literally true. In the early ages of the church, bigotry and superstition had a great share in promoting an unlimited respect to the clergy. Ignorance too contributed not a little to enhance a reverence for the ministry, who were at that time almost the only men of learning and information. If we then attribute a just portion of that respect, which the ancient clergy enjoyed, to the prevailing ignorance and superstition, and compare the remainder with that which our clergy now enjoy, without the aid of either, amidst all the popular interested prejudices, all the systematical

depreciations under which they labour, from the malice of atheists and schismatics; if these circumstances, I say, are all of them duly considered, I insist that, they will rather gain than lose by the comparison. But it is an absurd thing to quarrel with the riches of an establishment, (the object, it appears, of your present displeasure) which are undoubtedly among the number of temporal blessings. It is reasonable to expect, from the frequency of examples, that, as good men, under similar circumstances, enjoy equal respect; when one of them is exalted, he will of course enjoy more than he did before. In this present state of things, he, who by embracing a voluntary poverty obtains the reputation of uncommon piety, may be suspected of hypocrisy; for he thereby rejects those very means, which God has put into his hands, of becoming the instrument of benevolence. But he, who uses his affluence in hospitality and charity, discovers his Christian fortitude, in rejecting those powerful temptations which riches always supply, and his piety in using his heavenly gifts to the glory of God, and the good of his brethren.

A rich establishment, therefore, in its natural tendency, must make a clergy more respected than a poor one. And this is a maxim which all do and must admit, who, leaving the speculations of a study, draw their experience from men and things,

You

You bring in Dr. Adam Smith to second your opposition to this maxim. He is a great authority upon many subjects no doubt; but he is not infallible: and it must be a very superficial observer indeed, who can be sensible that he is in the right. You assume, that the Scotch clergy are a poor clergy,—and conclude that they are more respected than ours. Now both these positions, I apprehend, are without foundation, the effect of a superficial observation and a hasty conclusion. The Scotch clergy cannot be properly esteemed poorer than ours. Poverty is a term of relative signification, and cannot with propriety be applied absolutely to any man or set of men. Now if we compare the general wealth of Scotland and that of its several districts, with the actual revenues of their clergy, we shall find no great difference in their relative proportion, from that between the general riches of England and the revenues of its clergy. Nay, I question, whether the Scotch clergy do not enjoy a greater proportion of the land's substance than ours. Their allowance is but scanty it is true; but the people's possessions are scanty too; they contribute to their pastors in mites: but they have but two mites in all. It favours a little of Phari-
saical reasoning to conclude otherwise than according to our Lord's judgment: "Of a truth I say
unto you, this poor widow hath cast in more
than they all." This idea of relative poverty Dr. Adam Smith is no stranger to, as he has shewn
by

by his famous treatise on the Wealth of Nations: and I can see no reason why the clergy's wealth is not be estimated by the same rule as that of others.

If the Scotch clergy then cannot be properly styled a poor clergy, your argument falls to the ground; where I shall leave it, in order to discover the truth of your other position: which may be supposed by you still to retain its truth, though it has failed to serve your purpose, when cited in proof of your argument.

That the Scotch clergy enjoy a greater respect from the people, than ours do, is a fact, which (if you contend for) must be proved from observation, not by argument. I must therefore beg leave to inform you, that my own experience in Scotland proves no such thing. I crossed the Tweed prejudiced with the same notion which you have adopted, and did not relinquish it, till much observation and many experiments justified my suspicion, that it was a compliment to the Scotch politeness, by no means due. Among the higher ranks I found the same freedoms taken with the clergy, as is too usual with us. Among the lower classes I observed no greater reverence paid to the cloth, than what is common in all country parishes throughout England.

Your

Your question, Sir, in p. 71, "On what part of the New Testament is this a comment?" A question which you propose upon quoting Mr. B.'s idea of an effectual establishment, appears very frivolous, and totally irrelevant to the purpose of confutation. But the general scope of Mr. B.'s words (since you propose such a question) may serve as an answer, though not a direct one, to it; and may have more effect in satisfying impartial enquiring Christians, than a whole chapter of your questions, which the unwary or the ignorant may suppose unanswerable. Mr. B.'s words are a powerful comment upon (because the nervous description of an accomplishment of) that celebrated prophecy of Isaiah, (xlix. 23.) where he predicts the prosperous times of the church, and enumerates, among other circumstances, "that it shall become the care of kings" "and states." Which seems to most men no inconclusive argument for establishments in general. Speaking of the church, in words of consolation, the Almighty declares, "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers."

If, (as you say, p. 72.) it be true that persons of rank do not frequent our churches, and disregard establishments, (except for purposes of interest,) even now, when they have some connection with religion, through their connection with their relations, how much worse might we expect them to be, when there should exist no establishments, which
might

might serve to connect them, through their relations, to religion? This then is an argument in favour of establishments, as far at least as it regards the superior classes; for, by means of preferment, it diffuses religion among a set of men, who now have but little sense of it, but would undoubtedly have still less, when they should have no connection at all with it.

In the same page, you labour, by arguing from the reformation, to prove the inefficacy of a rich and splendid establishment. But I have before shewn that establishments are much assisted, not injured, by the respect which wealth and splendour afford. For it is then that we have the ten, instead of the single talent, committed to our care: which, with industry and good management, will produce an interest, proportionably great with the principal. But I observe (under favour of your pardon for digressing) that, in the scripture parables (all which were dressed in the plain attire of nature and probability) it is he to whom the single talent was committed, not he to whom the ten were given, who abused his trust. And that he, who had the ten, increased his talents, notwithstanding the mutinous and discontented citizens hated their lord, and refused subjection to those whom he had set over them. An useful instruction from hence arises, to those who are favoured with much, not to relax in their duty, or abdicate their station, though
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the city should be infested with noxious clamour and abuse.

You appear, in the same page, to court a comparison between the ministers of the methodists and of your own sect with those of the established church; which, unless you had applied for, as it were, I should have thought it beneath the cause of the establishment to have taken advantage of.— I must deny that you are destitute of all the natural human means of estimation; though it is true, that you have neither riches nor temporal titles: and I must alledge my inability to gather from Mr. B.'s words the sense which you have thought fit to make him speak, that the establishment is possessed of *all* the natural human means of estimation. For I acknowledge our deficiency in two of them, which a certain sect of dissenters, (with whom you have chosen to join yourself, in speaking of your respective perfections) since we have rejected them, have thought good to preserve for their own use: I mean *hypocrisy*, and *low deceit*. Two means of estimation very efficacious and very extensive too: though their influence reaches no further in general than among the lowest ranks. And it has always been among these that schism has hitherto flourished: as its opinions and manners are well suited to those, whose mean situations render them desirous of change; for they well know, that, as their condition is the meanest, any alteration must be to their advantage.

vantage. It was reserved for these glorious days, that schism should exalt her brazen front in Revolution societies, and rich manufacturing towns.

You cannot be ignorant how the very frequent instances of hypocrisy have brought a general reproach upon that whole sect; that their teachers rise from the lowest and most depraved in society; and that not unfrequently the Apostle's description fits them too well: "They have the form of godliness, without the power: and are those who creep into houses, and lead captive silly women," (2 Tim. iii. 6.) those whose weak judgments are easily controuled, as a low cunning, and insinuating air of sanctity shall chuse. You know the power of enthusiastick zeal and noise over the minds of the vulgar, and how it enjoys the privileges and respect which are paid to sincerity, as long as the fraud remains undiscovered. You know likewise how improbable, nay almost impossible, it is for those who suspect no deceit, and if they did, have neither talents nor opportunity to detect it, to withhold their assent to those doctrines and designs, which come recommended to them with every argument, adapted to lull the reason and engage the passions. It is a very easy task to engage the respect of the illiterate and undiscerning; but the same means will not be effectual, (as experience might inform you, Sir, if you could look into establishments) to gain the respect of those men,

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whose

whose abilities are strong, and their discernment quick to perceive the difference between the sacred garb of holiness, and the thread-bare cloak of pretension. We must likewise take into the account, that mens industry is in general strongly exerted by the consciousness of their being the minority. This gives a spur to their exertions, and energy to their words, and renders them as vigilant to prevent surprize as to improve opportunity. These circumstances of industry, which are naturally the attendants upon a rising party, whether hypocrisy or sincere zeal be the movers, will always contribute to procure respect. From hence, then, I cannot controvert, but on the contrary I really believe your affirmation, "that your ministers are more "respected by their congregations, than ours."

Before I dismish this head, I must observe to you, Sir, that I was not a little surprized to find you voluntarily taking in the methodists to share in the compliment which you had provided. Their principles appear diametrically opposite to yours: bigotry is their boast, it is your abhorrence. And, besides this, they retain some little affection and attachment to the church: you professedly are an enemy to it, and are perpetually employed, as you confess, in meditating its destruction. Do you find yourself insufficient for the attack, that you would call in an ally? An ally too, of so contrary principles, that you know you coincide but in one point, that
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of hostility against authorities. But, like Samson's foxes, though you both run pulling different ways, the end is answered provided you carry a fire-brand through the land.

Your 8th letter begins in very suspicious language, when you write to Mr. Burke, that "you certainly magnify the benefits derived from religion itself too much, valuable as I allow it to be, when you say (134), "We know, and what is better we feel, that religion is the basis of civil society, and the source of all good and all comfort."

Alas! Sir, that a minister of the gospel, who professes a zeal for the cause of religion, should suffer the cold hand of philosophick accuracy to restrain men from giving *too* much honour to the Almighty God, in whom we live and move and have our being. "I tell you (said our Lord upon a similar occasion) that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." Luke xix. 40.

I cannot suppose you in earnest, when you put that string of questions, which appears at the head of this letter. In Mr. Burke you find, you say, "surely more of the rhetorician than the reasoner." If I could find either in your remarks, or even but a little of the divine, the severity of your criticism

might have been less reprehensible: but I must declare, that to me your criticism appears but cavil; your questions are either frivolous, or, if meant to convey assertions, they are false, and the conclusions insinuated are inaccurate and fallacious.—“Is there no good, or comfort, in any thing but religion, or what flows from it?” I answer, that there is no solid good or comfort in any thing but religion. Other things are but miserable comforters, and frequently none.—“Is it not possible to preserve the peace of society, without calling in the aid of religion?” To this I answer in the negative. For since the peace of society is at present with difficulty preserved, though it receives the aid of religion, society would doubtless suffer much greater injury, if it were unassisted by those restraints which a sense of religion imposes. For instance, in the case of oaths, which is a ceremony of religion, we find many an offender, who without hesitation will commit other enormities, will shudder at perjury. Hence the magistrate is furnished with a restraint over his conduct, which the most vigilant police can never obtain. Thus Herod, for his oath’s sake, was faithful to his promise, though the performance of it was a murder.—But to pass by many instances, which might prove the necessity of religion to the peace of society, many wholesome laws may be made, no doubt, to prevent men from injuring one another: but we know from melancholy experience, that they are unable
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to accomplish their end. The utmost human laws can do, is to threaten with punishment those actions which are injurious to society. But when the fact is perpetrated, the peace of society is broken: the punishment of the criminal can only prevent future crimes, by practically convincing the people of the certainty that crimes will be punished. But religion affects the heart; it purifies that busy laboratory of evil works, and destroys the seeds of sin, before they vegetate into vice. This truth you will find, Sir, in almost every page of the bible: a book which is not afraid of ascribing *too much* merit to religion. If you had rather consult profane authors, view the heathen world in their governments; and you will find, that this truth, the necessity of religion to preserve the peace of society, was so deeply impressed upon their judgments, that, as they were not favoured from heaven with a religion, they contrived one as well as they were able, from the best principles which they could collect.

In pages 85 and 86, you seem to take it for granted, that the words, "the poor shall have the gospel preached unto them" necessarily signifies, that they shall have it preached unto them, if I may use the expression, free of all costs. And that by the *poor* are signified only the indigent and moneyless. Then you take occasion to set forth the cruelty of taking small tithes. From small tithes you proceed to the Irish White Boys; and at

last conclude, as in p. 73, with a compliment to yourself and dissenters. In this order I will endeavour to follow you. With due respect to your learning and information, I observe, that when you contend for a gratuitous preaching of the gospel to the poor, you appear to have lost sight of the most extensive meaning of the word poor. You have argued from it as signifying only the indigent and moneyless. I question whether it has any particular reference at all to such a description of persons; but it is plainly in general applied to the poor in spirit, that is, the meek and lowly. It would have been no particular recommendation of the christian religion that the poor might have it without paying for it; since, what they enjoyed of other religions, in no way affected their purse: and it is rather absurd to suppose that the gospel-preachers recommended their doctrine by saying that it was the cheapest; when in other places we find, that they who receive it, must purchase it with the sacrifice of all their possessions, and sometimes their very lives. I apprehend, the circumstance of absolute pecuniary poverty was never meant to be comprehended under the denomination poor: but by that term was implied either all those lower ranks, to whom the heathen religions paid little or no attention in their systems; or in general the poor in spirit, that is the lowly and humble. The general fault of all the religions, which existed when our Saviour came into the world, was their being confined to
learned

learned philosophers and the small circle of their disciples, who were generally composed of the superior ranks.

A religion, so conspicuously different from those which were at that time prevalent, which held out rewards to virtue, and punishment to vice, whether found in the great or small, nay which pronounced greatness to be rather an evil than a title to reward, and a virtuous poverty an honourable state; such a religion might well be called a religion for the poor, and be described as having them particularly under its care.

But it is very probable, that the term poor comprehends no more than the humble and lowly. This I gather from the promiscuous use of the words *poor*, *poor in spirit*, *meek*, &c. in the scriptures. Thus Matt. v. 3. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." In Luke vi. 20. "Blessed be the poor, &c." Isaiah lxi. 1. "The spirit of the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the *meek*." In Matt. xi. 5. and Luke iv. 18. it is, "the *poor* have the gospel preached unto them, &c."

When you say (86), "The gospel was in its proper sense (that is, according to *your* explanation, its metaphysical sense, see p. 25) preached to the poor by our Saviour, his apostles, and other

primitive christians, who were themselves poor," you certainly speak the truth; but I imagine, that it was their poverty of spirit, (which is found among the affluent as well as indigent,) which procured them that happiness, rather than their want of the necessaries of life. From hence I conclude, that, from whatever source your error took its rise, an error it certainly is, to apply that scripture phrase which I have just considered, as you have done,

With respect to tithes, Sir, your insinuations are invidious, not to say false. The poorest parishioners are seldom or never subject to the payment of tithes; and when they are, they are generally exempted through motives of charity; and rigorous exactments, so far from being frequently practised, are seldom heard of. The cry of oppression begins with those sons of Mammon, who, to save their money, are always ready to join in the words of your apology for the White Boys, "that they detest the instruction for which they pay, and receive no advantage from it." All I have to say of the Irish insurgents is this, whether their oppression be deserved or not, it is well known that they are a cruel and factious set of men,

I come now to the compliment which you pay to yourself and dissenters: a modest contrast with your representation of the cruelty and rapacity of the established clergy. To sum up the substance,
you

you give it us in a few words. "The same is the case with us dissenters as it was in the times of our Saviour and the apostles and primitive christians:" which interpreted by the context is this: The gospel is preached in its *proper* sense, and we have neither establishment nor tithes. That is, we dissenters, (methodists included according to the precedent in p. 72,) though we put as many senses upon the gospel as there were tongues at the confusion of Babel, all preach the gospel in its proper sense, exactly as it was in the times of our Saviour and the apostles, and other primitive christians, who were as poor as ourselves. Alas! Sir, this is not the language of honest truth and sound reasoning!

Upon the subject of an elective clergy, which you discuss in p. 97, you, who have been all your life an advocate for them, must doubtless have all the arguments in their favour at command. I shall only represent a few errors in your reasoning; which, when you get upon a favourite topick, rush from your pen as fast as the ink. Your maxim, "that it is the interest both of the person who performs the duty, and the person who is benefited by it, that it be *well done*," is true and sound. But to your question, "Can it make any difference whether the duty be of an ecclesiastical or civil nature?" I answer, that it can; and that a very material one. For experience shews, that, in general, men are either partially or wholly blind to their
real

real good, whether their blindness arise from wilful or involuntary prejudice, not only in spiritual but in temporal affairs. Hence it becomes the interest of the person who performs a duty, to do it rather as it shall *please* the person for whom it is done, than that it may at all events *benefit* him: for he may take this for granted, (if he is at all acquainted with mankind,) that his salary is secure only as long as his conduct is approved; and we know that he, who possesses the happy talent of pleasing, is the man who will be sure to be approved. But the office of the clergy is very often to reprove for faults, and to speak very plainly the most disagreeable of all truths. And you know, Sir, that in this candid world, we do not often meet with persons, who voluntarily reward them, who reprove them of their faults: and if you look among your own brethren, you will find, it is not he, who does his duty best, but he who performs it most agreeably, that pockets the most liberal contributions. Thus the inevitable consequence is this: The rich, who can least bear to be reprov'd, but whose *contributions*, as *voluntary* as they are *ample* (87), in the present state of things, will of course secure the greatest share of influence; these men will ever prove controllers over the minister's liberty, and secretly, if not openly, will say unto the prophets, "Prophecy unto us right things, speak unto us "smooth things." (Is. xxx. 10.)

“Every man,” you say, (97.) “will do his duty best, when he has the eye of a master immediately upon him.” Did you then never hear, Sir, of what the Apostle calls eye service, a man-pleasing service? (Eph. vi. 6.) such an one as he will not admit, even to masters according to the flesh? But your parallel is inaccurate, or the tendency is erroneous, if you mean to insinuate that the clergy are servants of the people: No, Sir, you, in your great humility, may condescend to rank yourself with kings, and acknowledge yourself their fellow-servant, and happy are you if you can keep alive, in this voluntary servitude, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The clergy of our church are servants of the Almighty, and not the people’s drudges; they are the shepherds of Christ’s flock, the feeders of his sheep, the priests of the new covenant, the ministers of God’s sanctuary.

In p. 101, you say, “Despicable as our situation may appear to you, who certainly know very little about us; an application to the studies suited to our profession appears, by the number of our writings, to be much greater than among the clergy of the established church.” Here then, Sir, you give us a criterion, by which we are to measure the application of the Dissenters to the studies suited to their profession, viz. the *number* of their writings. You certainly differ widely in your method of judging, from the establishment; for

for they judge from the learning, accuracy, and impartiality of books, not from their number. And when a clergyman publishes treatises on annuities, on the properties of air, or even on any political question, though his works should be very numerous, they are so far from judging favourably of his great application to the studies suited to his profession, that they conclude it more than probable, that in them he is deficient; or at least far inferior to others who have given up their time and studies to them alone. The old adage was *Μεγα Βιβλίον, μέγα κακόν*; and in these days, he who talks best, not he who talks most, is esteemed the wise man.

If I may be permitted to offer my opinion, by way of advice, it is this. That it would certainly be better, if a certain description of writers were to let us know still less about them, than the great number of their books at present permit; and that when they do write, they should season their works with a little truth and candour; for scurrility and invective can never support a bad cause, but they often ruin a good one.

Thus have I toiled through the unpleasant task of exposing the weakness of a learned man: which, I trust, may, in some measure, be useful, in undeceiving those of your readers, who, from the glittering of superior talents, may be induced to adopt your authority for argument. Prejudice, Sir,
that

that tyrant of the judgment, that hard task-master of reason, which compels it to make brick, without giving it straw; that deeply-rooted prejudice, in favour of your own opinions, which you conceive (p. 51.) to involve profound and extensive wisdom, has not produced those irrefragable arguments, which might have been expected from such abilities as you have discovered upon other subjects.

These inconclusive reasonings may be no more than weaknesses. But I must now take notice of what by no means can rank under so venial an appellation. Calumny and abuse, detraction and bitter invective, are more than weaknesses; they are criminal faults; faults which cannot be overlooked, because they are highly injurious to society. But my delineations of these crimes are needless; for you, Sir, in your lucid intervals of patriotick zeal, are better able than myself to discourse of the precepts and duties of our holy religion; I shall, therefore, proceed to exhibit to you the depredations and mischief, of what, in the paroxysms of your fit, you have been the author. Upon this head I shall be short.

Your assertions and insinuations (for insinuations are convenient, when assertions are cognizable by the law of the land) amount to these three heads of abuse.

That

That Mr. Burke and the admirers of his performance are not allowed to rank among the "liberal, rational, and virtuous part of the world."

That the "established clergy are the most negligent of their proper duty, least strict in their morals, and most despised in Christendom. That they subscribe articles which men of sense cannot, and perform duties which are against their conscience; and that they exact their tithes with the utmost rigour."

And lastly, that both Houses of Parliament are Atheists or Deists.

Believe me, Sir, when I write this, I shudder at the melancholy ravage which blindness of heart can make, even upon a superior understanding, when it rejects those first principles of true wisdom, humility, and charity. Alas! when these are gone, we lose the first ornaments of human nature; from the dregs, it is folly to look for either christian or philosopher.

1.) Your last letter begins thus: "I cannot conclude these letters without congratulating, not you, Sir, or the many admirers of your performance, who have no feeling of joy on the occasion, but the French nation and the world; I mean the liberal, the rational, and the virtuous part

" part of the world, on the great revolution which
 " has taken place in France, as well as on that
 " which some time ago took place in America.
 " Such events as these teach the doctrine of liberty,
 " civil and religious, with infinitely greater clear-
 " nefs and force, than a thousand treatises on the
 " subject; they speak a language intelligible to all
 " the world, and preach a doctrine congenial to
 " every human heart."

It appears then, Sir, that your congratulations
 mark those whom you deem liberal, rational, and
 virtuous: the rest remain of course neither liberal,
 rational, nor virtuous. With respect to the French;
 before their revolution, I apprehend you were not
 of opinion that they particularly deserved to be
 called liberal, rational, or virtuous: I never heard
 that French virtue was ever peculiarly excellent.
 But now, wonderful to tell, since they have hung
 their great men upon lamp-irons, they have be-
 come, in the space of about two years, quite another
 people. Their rooted prejudices they have in this
 short time weeded out, and now a fair crop of
 liberality succeeds. But what is most surprizing of
 all is, that a people, who, two years ago, were
 renowned for irreligion and licentiousness, have
 now, by habits of cruelty, massacre, rapine, and
 confusion, become virtuous! Who would not pro-
 mote such a revolution, which should be followed
 by such blessed fruits! From the last words of the
 passage,

passage, your opinion is this : that the French revolution and the American rebellion preach a doctrine congenial to every *human* heart. Hence it follows, that those hearts, to whom these doctrines are not so, are not human. It appears then, that those tender hearts, who have shuddered at the cruelties which have lately occurred, and to whom the French doctrines are not congenial, have all along been grossly mistaking, in calling the patriotick hangmen cruel and inhuman ; since, by your account, these are the inhuman wretches, and the preachers of these doctrines are those of human hearts.

The admirers of Mr. B.'s performance, from my observation, appear to be in a much larger proportion than nine to ten ; all of whom you insinuate are neither liberal, rational, nor virtuous. In another place, you condemn as knaves or fools all the church of England clergy, and most of the laity, computed to be about five-sixths of the whole kingdom. (99.) In another place, the majority of the parliament are infidels. (72.) When all those, whom you not only disapprove, but consign to severe penalties, are deducted, Sir, I fear our little island will peradventure have hardly ten righteous men in it.

In the next place I shall notice your very gross abuse of the clergy.

In p. 68, you express yourself, under pretence of receiving your information from the confession of many persons in the church, in these very uncommon terms:—"There are no clergy in Christendom more negligent of their proper duty, less strict in their morals, and consequently [none] more despised."—This, Sir, is a sentence, which could hardly have proceeded from any but a bitter enemy. Your discernment is either very gross, or your experience very confined, and your enmity implacable, if these be your real sentiments. Your discernment, Sir, and experience, I rather suppose better than most men's. I would I had the alternative to impute your words to a better motive, than that which is forced upon me. Your assertion, however, is a poison, which, in a great measure, carries its own antidote. For, exclusively of the consideration, that it is an assertion without proof, there is this circumstance, which renders it very suspicious: You have it from sons of the church, who must know, that you are its professed enemy, seeking its destruction. Now, to impartial men, this reflection will doubtless occur: the only honest excuse for exposing the vices of men is with the view to reformation. But these men, in exterior profession our friends, and whose interest it is to guard against negligence and careless discipline, in silence basely desert the garrison, and discover all its weaknesses to a cruel and vigilant enemy, who breathes nothing but ruin. Your information, Sir,

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comes from spies and betrayers ; from men, whose attacks are more fatal than those of an open enemy, because they wear the mask of friendship. You, Sir, who no doubt are as expert in forging new suits of Ethics, as in contriving new Religions, may rank all this under the virtue Candour ; we call it Calumny. But to proceed.

In p. 86, you insinuate that the clergy are cruel extortioners, “ by exacting tithes with the utmost
 “ rigour from the poorest of their parishioners,
 “ and actually ejecting them by levying a distress
 “ from their little tenements.” Now were this often the case, (which it is false to affirm) it would not be the clergy who are to blame, for demanding that subsistence which the law of the land has allotted them ; but those persons, who, by withholding from the clergyman his dues, oblige him to call in the aid of the law. But would you, as a lay-landlord, either account yourself, or be esteemed by others cruel and rigorous, in ejecting any of your tenants, who did not pay their rent ? Suppose your estate consisted entirely of little tenements, could your charity so far prevail, as that you would relinquish your own subsistence, and starve, that you might convert your tenements into pauper-houses ? No, Sir ; from what little of your disposition I have been able to collect, I must look upon you as the furthest from such a projector : and I can view this reflection upon the clergy, though you may have the best

best intentions in the world, as favouring strongly of envy and malice. Whatever your design may be, these means are not suited to reformation : But it is easy to see, that they are calculated to bring an odium upon those very men, who, you complain, are already despised.

The same spirit of restless censure, of which we have seen too much already, runs through your whole performance ; but the mention of bishops and dignified clergy rouses your Sampsonian strength, and makes you snap asunder, like burnt flax, the restraints of veracity. How, Sir, have our dignified clergy merited your censure, which I find in p. 88, joined with a false assertion, “ that the lowest and “ poorest of the vulgar are below their notice ?” No man of common sense would require a bishop to visit the sick-bed of a pauper, or to officiate in the obscure village places of worship, as the Methodist teachers do. This would be as improper for a bishop to engage in, whose office is of a more general and extensive nature, as for a country curate to obtrude in the management of a diocese.

Again, you insinuate, that the lower people are not taken care of. For, (87) speaking of the Methodists, (many of whom are very worthy men) you say, “ I honour their wisdom and œconomy, “ and think most highly of those persons, whose “ education and habits dispose and enable them to

“ adapt themselves to the instruction of the lowest
 “ and poorest of the vulgar.” Have you no
 honour then for those, whose education and habits
 enable them to instruct the highest and richest of
 the superior ranks of society? It seems, by your
 general discourse, that you have not. No, you
 have no respect for talents, for learning, for elo-
 quence, and all those accomplishments which the
 wisest and best men have always considered as the
 first gifts of heaven. It appears then, that you do
 not esteem the souls of rich and poor of equal
 value, but give decided preference to those of the
 poor; which is a doctrine the Bible never men-
 tions; nor do the customs of any other nation, that
 I know of, give any sanction to it. It is your own,
 Sir, purely your own: in fact, what all your words
 amount to, but a sneer, I am unable to discover.
 What pity, Sir, you do not consider, that a sneer
 is no argument; it is beneath even a rhetorician,
 much more a reasoner. (84)

In p. 99, we have insinuations, (for plain asser-
 tions, as I observed before, are dangerous things
 in some cases) amounting to this curious position:
 “ That *all* our clergy, with most of the established
 “ church, are knaves or fools.” This compre-
 hensive impeachment includes, according to com-
 mon computation, more than five-sixths of the whole
 kingdom. These are your words: “ It (that is, that
 no person will officiate in a Christian church but
 for

for the sake of the emolument!) “ may be the case
 “ with a church, the articles of which *men of sense*
 “ cannot subscribe, and the *stated duty of which is*
 “ *against their consciences*. For such services as
 “ these men must be paid, and very well paid,
 “ too; and in general, it will be done for nothing
 “ but the pay.” Here you have stumbled upon
 another error, by adopting your own idea, instead
 of Mr. Burke’s; and, under the notion of vindicating
 the honour of Christianity, you turn upon
 the poor church again. Do you think there is any
 merit in such bold assertions and abuse? Or that
 they are likely to promote either your credit or
 your cause? They need no comment. I shall only
 observe, that now you have fully taken your re-
 venge. You complained, in p. 174, that you were
 called a cheat and deceiver; (for it seems you claim
 kindred with those upon whom Mr. B.’s censure
 falls,) but now, Sir, you and your party may rest
 satisfied with your exploits, since you have included
 almost the whole kingdom under the titles of fools
 or knaves,

I cannot dismiss this head, without noticing the
 beautiful picture you draw of the dissenting clergy.
 But as contrast is always beautiful in painting, I
 shall bring your two portraits of the dissenting clergy
 (Methodists included I presume) and the established
 under one view. Speaking of the established, you
 say, “ There are no clergy more negligent of their

“ proper duty, less strict in their morals, and con-
 “ sequently [none] more despised.” (68.) “ They
 “ are rapacious and rigorous in their exactions from
 “ the poor.” (86.) “ And above taking notice
 “ of the lower orders.” (88.) “ They subscribe
 “ articles, which men of sense cannot; and perform
 “ duties which men of sense dare not; and they
 “ are hired for it.” (99.) Speaking of your own
 and the rest of the dissenting clergy, these are your
 words:—“ They give their time and fortune to the
 “ work of the ministry.—They are never wanting
 “ persons of independent fortune and the most
 “ liberal education—almost all are able and pious
 “ men,—who have (if I rightly understand this
 “ confused sentence) the principle of *genuine* piety
 “ and benevolence.”—And you will venture to say,
 “ They are (not only far more so than ours, but)
 “ as truly respectable and independent in mind, as
 “ any set of clergy in the world!”——“ From all
 “ blindness of heart, from pride, vain-glory and
 “ hypocrisy, from envy, hatred, and malice, and
 “ from all uncharitableness, good Lord deliver us!”

The last unjustifiable position, which I shall notice,
 is contained in these words:—“ If the Houses of
 “ Lords and Commons were fairly polled, after
 “ voting according to their *real opinion*, whether
 “ think you would the majority be in favour of
 “ christianity or against it? Many, and those not
 “ inattentive observers, think the latter.” Here,
 Sir,

Sir, if you do not mean to shelter your own opinion under the duplicity of an interrogation, there is a very plain assertion, that the Houses of Lords and Commons are Atheists or Deists. How far this most indecent assertion may be considered as an insult upon our most august legislative assembly, it is not my particular design to enquire; but it most indubitably possesses all the incendiary properties, of promoting in the people disrespect, jealousies, distrust, and hatred for those very persons, with whom they have, in confidence, entrusted themselves, their property, their lives. When the people choose their representative, they elect a person, whom they suppose, from his joining in the usual ceremonies of religion, attached to christianity in general, and particularly to the national church. When he enters upon his trust, he solemnly pledges himself, by the most sacred obligation of an oath, to protect and promote the general welfare of his constituents. Under this assurance each man reposes himself in security; and is at leisure and disposed to enjoy that portion of this world's good, with which providence has blessed him. You tell us, "that our governors, "and those to whom we have trusted our lives and "liberties, have grossly deceived us; when they appeared to bind themselves to their duty, they were "not in earnest; so far from laying under any obligation, they deny and deride the very grounds "upon which it rests." They indeed called the Al-

mighty to witness their promises; and pledged their hopes of salvation through Christ for the veracity of their words. But, if they doubt the being of God, and ridicule the very notion of salvation, what a comfortable confidence must we have in their profession, who possess no principle which we can trust, and who have deceived us by the most base treachery, even before they have entered upon their office?

No doubt, Sir, society is highly obliged to you for opening their eyes, and stabbing their peace. Every one, who knows your good intentions, cannot but applaud your freedom of speech; which for the publick good braves all the dangers a censorious nation may threaten it with. But, allowing the truth of your position, I am at a loss to account for the cause of this amazing prevalence of infidelity in parliament; unless it be one of these two, either that almost the whole kingdom are infidels, or at least all those men who are eligible; or, that members become infidels when they enter the house. The last I apprehend is too absurd to claim your approbation. The first must be the cause; especially when we consider your very forcible argument in its favour, p. 102, "that church establishments always have, and ever must, produce un-believers." Upon these considerations, therefore, I presume it is, that you think it not preposterous to assert, that the majority of the houses of parliament

ment are infidels. And, as this is in your opinion, a truth of the utmost importance to be known, (or I am sure your benevolence would not have suffered it to escape your pen,) the world ought to applaud your great zeal and courage. And what liberal minister of the gospel would hesitate to incur the dangers of a prosecution for a libel, who, by honestly defaming one half the kingdom, could rescue the other from ignorance and error?

I have now, Sir, completed my design. But I cannot conclude without some general observations, which naturally rise upon a review of your publication.

You have engaged the publick attention for some time past in the character of a reformer, and have always appeared in the foremost rank of contenders for what you call liberty and truth. That what you contend for is neither, is not to my present purpose to shew. I regard you at present only in that point of view, in which you have placed yourself by your late publication. In this I find an enthusiastick zeal for innovation, which bears down all before it. I find every occasion seized with avidity to depreciate and calumniate all those several subordinations and dependencies in society, which have always been the sources of good order and prosperity. But you stop not at the institution; you vilify not establishments only, but level
your

your abuse at persons. And, because the established clergy enjoy a greater share of property, than you think is right; or receive their portion in a manner contrary to your taste, you attack them with all that rancorous severity, which is as disgraceful to yourself, as it is injurious to them.

False assertions are not the means which great men employ to confute an adversary. To misrepresent words and facts may very frequently proceed from a clouded intellect, or a dull apprehension. But, to attack a set of men in the most essential parts of their character is an offence against society, Sir, which cannot be palliated or pardoned. No patriotick zeal can atone for sins against christian charity. No civil advantages can compensate the loss of reputation, especially to the clergy, whose character is valuable to them, not only as men, but as *teachers of christianity*. The clergy are to engage men to their duty not only by argument but example. Their light is to shine before men: but this light it is your endeavour to extinguish. And you have the effrontery not only to oppose the precepts and design of our Lord, but to contend that all who do not receive your doctrines are grossly misled. Such delusion and arrogance united are seldom seen in a protestant country! Experience teaches others wisdom, but you it makes only more resolute in vociferation, and more obstinate in error. Your anathemas are thundered upon all dissenters
from

from your opinion : and the terms knaves, fools and infidels you deal out with papal fluency and liberality. But it is to be remembered, that we must not subject ourselves to the dominion of a wayward and passionate zeal, but to the more easy yoke of sound reason and collective experience. The warmth of zeal proves nothing but the passion of the man. The evidence of the truth we must expect from other sources. But men, who form their opinions from their passions, are always more earnest in their defence of error, than those who are made diffident by right reason. Therefore we must not judge from their earnestness and fervour, but from the soundness of their reason : for in the defence of a good cause we generally rely much upon its merits ; and are never so warm and intemperate, as when we are engaged in the defence of a doubtful or a false one. It is then we become entangled in sophistical intricacies, in which the more we struggle, the faster we are bound.

Your work, Sir, bears all these marks, which, next to a plain confession, clearly prove, that you are conscious of the weakness of your cause. For who can suppose, that you would employ false assertion, when you could make a successful confutation ? That you would misrepresent words, when you could fairly combat their true meaning ? That you would adopt railing, as long as reason would assist you ?

It would be in vain to hint to you the dangers of innovation, for novelty is the end of all your pursuits; and, whether you call it reformation, or by any other term, as long as you find among your countrymen the Athenian passion for hearing something new, converts you must gain. It is in vain to expect from you an attempt to confute, by solid argument, those able opponents in opinion, who appear to have taken away all hopes of your success by fair reasoning. Of this you are aware. And accordingly, Hooker, Warburton, Sherlock, and others, are not favoured with notice, much less with an argument. No; these great writers are too strong for you. And as it is your policy, so it is your practice, to select the *pamphleteers* of the present day for review; and of these it is the last only which is noticed: the last sound which catches your ear is sure to be the key-note to your next composition.

The church, I trust, is neither so depraved nor so weak, as to apprehend ruin from within, or from without. It is but just, however, to mention your remarkable solicitude for it. For though you confess your design of spoiling it of its wealth, and undermining its credit, you kindly inform us, of two *real causes* of apprehension. But this, Sir, is an old artifice, and will no longer take effect; and is used now plainly for the purpose of blinding the eye of suspicion, which has hitherto baffled all the attempts

attempts of our enemies. This is a very common stratagem among the members of the light-fingered society, who are the last to discover their real designs, but the first to cry stop thief. Neither will you succeed in your attempts to alarm us by the encreasing number of dissenters, or to lull us into security by your amiable picture of their inoffensive dispositions. There are numbers of them, doubtless, very able and useful members of society, who contribute a great share to the opulence and prosperity of the country : but it is generally determined, that though they are expert at managing the sails, others are better at the helm.

Your general design appears to be, the disjoining of church and state, and to throw them into a perfect independence. This is fully illustrated in your notions of religion, as the basis of civil society ; and in other parts of your works. And in the prosecution of them you have used those means which none but enemies to religion have dared to employ. To sow dissensions, to raise animosities, to excite jealousies, are the only visible effects of your endeavours. Both our church and state are too sensible of the benefit of that alliance and amity in which they have been educated, to separate themselves now, when the violent attacks of a common enemy only press the necessity of a stricter union. No, Sir, the people of this happy island are too wise to hearken to every importunate prophet, or dreamer

dreamer of dreams. They know the value of peace and prosperity; and will never suffer themselves to be defrauded of their happiness and honour; and they concur with the Revolutionists and Old-Jewry reformers in no other point, than in the common prayer, that the latter may "now depart in peace."

FINIS.



